



United States Courts for the Ninth Circuit

Public Information Office

David Madden, Manager • (415) 355-8930 • (415) 355-8901 Fax • dmadden@ce9.uscourts.gov

NEWS RELEASE

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Contact: David J. Madden, (415) 355-8930

“Children at Risk” Helps Younger Students Grasp Basics of Legal System

Legal professionals and educators are reporting great success with a video-based educational program intended to introduce younger students to the basics of the American judicial system.

“Children at Risk” is designed for use by judges, attorneys, and teachers to explain legal concepts and trial procedures to elementary school students, primarily fourth- and fifth-graders. Program materials, which include a DVD or videotape and written manual with suggestions on how to make effective classroom presentations, are available free through the Ninth Circuit Office of the Circuit Executive.

Originally developed by the San Diego County Bar Association, “Children at Risk” won an American Bar Association award for community and educational outreach in 2002. It focuses on two fictional teenagers charged with selling marijuana at the local middle school. Their mock trial takes place on video, which has been edited so that appropriate legal explanations can be provided at key points in the legal process.

" 'Children at Risk' not only helps young people understand their roles within the framework of the trial, but also realize their responsibilities in real life," said federal Magistrate Judge Leo S. Papas of San Diego, who is featured in the program.

Two versions of the trial are provided. One includes commentary by Judge Papas, who explains legal concepts as they arise during the trial. It can be used by teachers when a guest speaker from the legal community is not available. The second version provides

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95 Seventh St. P.O. Box 193939 San Francisco CA 94119-3939

points at which the video may be paused and explanations made by the presenter. It can be used by judges or attorneys familiar with the legal concepts. A presentation typically takes 90 minutes, which allows time to watch the video, discuss key points, respond to questions, and deliberate on the verdict.

"Children at Risk" is available to federal and state court judges and staff, attorneys and teachers throughout the Ninth Circuit. For more information, call or email David Madden at the Office of the Circuit Executive, (415) 355-8930, dmadden@ce9.uscourts.gov.